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ABSTRACT

Findings from a study of Kentucky elementary school principals are presented in this paper, with attention to their demographic characteristics and roles in educational reform. Questionnaires mailed to all 1,122 elementary principles (including both public and private schools) in Kentucky yielded 570 returns, an approximate 51 percent response rate. Data analysis supported the premise that Kentucky elementary school principals are white, middle-aged males with a salary approximately 75 percent greater than that of teachers. The majority have slightly more than 10 years' total experience as a principal, but 60 percent plan to retire within the next 10 years. Most are satisfied with the quality of their inservice training and the current state administrative certification requirements. Fourteen tables present survey data. (LMI)

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KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS:

A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

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KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The decade of the 1980's has produced a growing body of knowledge concerning effective schools and the key role played by principals in such schools. Recent research has illustrated the principal's role in initiating school improvement and maintaining school effectiveness. Research contends that the principal is the most crucial position in the school system, especially as schools attempt to respond to current educational reforms, including site based managment. As the principal's responsibility has increased, so has the pressure on school boards and superintendents to make appropriate and timely appointments when principal vacancies occur. Researchers now report that over fifty percent of practicing administrators will retire in the next decade. If this prediction holds, even more pressure will be exerted on boards and superintendents.

Institutions of higher education also need more information regarding the demographics of practicing principals as colleges and universities endeavor to design relevant administrator preparation programs. College and universities must also be cognizant of the predictated demands for trained persons to fill the anticipated principal vacancies in the near future.

BACKGROUND

The obsolete perception of the school administrator as a passive, reactive manager has yielded to a more accurate recognition of the administrator as a pro-active instructional leader. Evidence accumulated from research, coupled with widespread, contemporary concern regarding the quality of American education, has contributed to a renewed interest in the important role school administrators play in initiating and sustaining school excellence.

INTRODUCTION

Prior to this study, little valid information existed concerning the status of elementary principals in Kentucky. Sparks conducted a study of Kentucky secondary principals in 1955 which Frady followed in 1965 and 1975. However, since Frady's last study, a void has existed with regard to the availability of relevant information concerning practicing principals, particularly elementary principals. This study was designed to collect and assimilate these needed data. The current research was directed toward demographies of practicing Kentucky elementary principals and the role they play in educational quality and reform.

METHODOLOGY

The previous research conducted by Sparks and Frady provided several questions which were utilized in the current

research. In addition, previous research studies conducted with Tennessee and Georgia principals contributed some supplemental questions. Other questions were generated by the researchers after consultation with national studies conducted by both the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Following careful analysis of the potential questions, the researchers constructed a preliminary version of the Kentucky Administrator Questionnaire (KAQ) which was field tested by separate administrations with graduate students at Western Kentucky University in the spring of 1988.

Revisions and subsequent modifications culminated in the KAQ which was administered to elementary principals of all Kentucky schools. A population of 1122 elementary principals, including both public and private schools, was identified from Kentucky State Department of Education records. The KAQ was mailed to the population with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and the anticipated use of the results, together with a postage-paid return envelope.

The first mailing was sent September 1988 with a follow-up in October 1988. As a consequence of both mailings, 577 responses were received with a total usable response of 570, for a 50.80 percent usable response rate.

FINDINGS

The primary research results reported in this presentation relate to the demographic data collected as a response to administration of the KAQ to elementary school principals in Kentucky. One of the major objectives of this study was to determine the status of practicing elementary principals, particularly regarding age and the principal's anticipated length of service. The mean age of the respondents was 46.8 years (see Table I), including 53.37 percent who were aged forty-five or over. Elementary principals were represented in large numbers at both ends of the age spectrum. At the upper end of the scale, 5.68 percent of the responding elementary principals were aged sixty or over.

The national trend, over the past few decades, has been a reduction in the number of female principals. The Kentucky respondents reported that 36.04 percent were female and 64.96 percent were male (see Table II).

Of the respondents, 93.62 percent were white, and 6.38 percent were Black (see Table III). Similarly, most of the respondents, 97.83 percent, were married and only 2.17 percent were single (see Table IV).

Respondents reported that 51.88 percent had been a principal at their current school for five years or less (see Table V). Over 75 percent of the respondents had been a

principal at their current school for ten years or less. The mean was 6.22 years as principal at the current school.

The salary reported by respondents indicated a significant upward movement since the last study (see Table VI). For example, 31.23 percent reported a salary in excess of $40,000.00; however, 18.19 percent indicated a salary less than $30,000.00. Over fifty percent of the respondents reported a salary between $30,000.00 and $40,000.00 with a mean salary of $36,588.45. Most respondents, 74.51 percent, also indicated that their salary was based upon employment for either 11 or 12 months (see Table VII).

The majority, 53.97 percent of the respondents, had ten or less years of total experience as a principal (see Table VIII). The mean was 10.86 years of total experience as a principal which compares with 6.22 years experience in their current school (see Table V).

Most respondents were satisfied with inservice training in Kentucky (see Table IX). More than 75 percent of the respondents were mostly or entirely satisfied with their inservice training. Only 11.71 percent of the respondents were mostly or entirely dissatisfied with the inservice training they received. Similarly, 73.12 percent of the respondents were mostly or entirely satisfied with administrative certification in Kentucky (see Table X). Only 13.08 percent were mostly or entirely dissatisfied with current certification requirements.

The majority of respondents, 61.4 percent, reported

working between 50 and 59 hours per week with a mean of 53.05 hours worked per week (see Table XI). In addition, 57.98 percent of the respondents indicated that they plan to retire in the next ten years (see Table XII).

Most of the respondents, 69.05 percent, were principals of small (less than 500 students) schools. Only two respondents were principals of schools with more than 1,200 students (see Table XIII). Also, a majority of respondents, 52.73 percent were not in favor of merit pay for administrators (see Table XIV).

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the data supports the premise that Kentucky elementary principals were typical of pricipals in the reported national studies. The most obvious conclusions were that Kentucky elementary principals were white, middle-age men with an average salary approximately 75 percent more than teachers. The majority had slightly more than ten years total experience as a principal, but over 60 percent plan to retire within the next ten years. Most were principals of small schools who worked over fifty hours per week. Similarly, most were satisfied with the quality of their inservice training and the current state administrative certification requirements.

KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

TABLE I

AGE OF RESPONDENTS

AGE	N	%
Under 25	0	00.00
25 - 29	5	0.89
30 -34	19	3.36
35 - 39	78	13.83
40 - 44	161	28.55
45 - 49	144	25.53
50 - 54	66	11.70
55 - 59	59	10.46
60 - 64	23	4.08
65 - 69	8	1.42
70 +	1	0.18
TOTALS $\bar{X}$ = 46.08	564	100.0%

KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

TABLE II

GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

SEX	N	%
Male	362	64.96
Female	204	36.04
TOTALS	566	100.0%

KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

TABLE III

RACE OF RESPONDENTS

RACE	N	%
White	528	93.62
Black	36	6.38
TOTALS	564	100.00%

KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

TABLE IV

MARITAL STATUS OF

RESPONDENTS

STATUS	N	%
Married	542	97.83
Single	12	2.17
TOTALS	554	100.0%

KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

TABLE V

RESPONDENT'S YEARS AS PRINCIPAL

AT CURRENT SCHOOL

YEARS	N	%
1 - 5	290	51.88
6 - 10	136	23.76
11 - 15	68	11.83
16 - 20	57	10.00
21 - 25	12	2.01
26 - 30	6	1.05
31 - 35	1	0.17
TOTALS $\bar{X} = 6.22$	570	100.0%

KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

TABLE V

SALARY OF RESPONDENTS

SALARY	N	%
Less than $10,000	3	0.56
$10,000 - $12,000	9	1.63
$13,000 - $15,999	1	0.18
$16,000 - $18,999	6	1.11
$19,000 - $21,999	5	0.93
$22,000 - $24,999	16	2.98
$25,000 - $27,999	25	4.84
$28,000 - $30,999	32	5.96
$31,000 - $33,999	66	12.24
$34,000 - $36,999	92	17.13
$37,000 - $39,999	114	21.22
$40,000 - $42,999	82	15.24
$43,000 - $45,999	34	6.33
$46,000 - $48,999	23	4.28
$49,000 - $51,999	21	3.91
$52,000 - $54,999	6	1.11
$55,000 - $57,999	0	0.00
$58,000 - $60,999	1	0.18
$61,000 - $63,999	0	0.00
$64,000 +	1	0.18
TOTALS $\bar{X}$ = $36,588.45	537	100.00%

KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

TABLE VII

MONTHS USED TO DETERMINE

RESPONDENT'S SALARY

MONTHS	N	%
Less than 9	3	0.54
9	13	2.33
10	126	22.62
11	216	38.78
12	199	35.73
TOTALS	557	100.0%

KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

TABLE VIII

RESPONDENT'S TOTAL NUMBER OF

YEARS AS PRINCIPAL

YEARS	N	%
1 - 5	167	29.45
6 - 10	139	24.52
11 - 15	96	16.93
16 - 20	111	19.58
21 - 25	34	5.99
26 - 30	13	2.29
31 - 35	6	1.06
36 +	1	0.18
TOTALS $\bar{X}$ = 10.86	567	100.0%

KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

TABLE IX

RESPONDENT'S RATING OF

INSERVICE TRAINING

RATING	N	%
Entirely Satisfactory	54	9.73
Mostly Satisfactory	372	67.03
Equally Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory	64	11.53
Mostly Unsatisfactory	55	9.91
Entirely Unsatisfactory	10	1.80
TOTALS	**555**	**100.0%**

KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

TABLE X

RESPONDENT'S LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

REGARDING CERTIFICATION

RATING	N	%
Entirely Satisfactory	55	9.86
Mostly Satisfactory	353	63.26
Equally Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory	77	13.80
Mostly Unsatisfactory	63	11.29
Entirely Unsatisfactory	10	1.79
TOTALS	558	100.0%

KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY PRINICPALS

TABLE XI

HOURS WORKED PER WEEK

BY RESPONDENTS

HOURS	N	%
Less than 40	55	9.65
40 - 49	77	13.51
50 - 59	350	61.40
60 -69	63	11.05
70 +	25	4.39
TOTALS $\bar{X}$ = 53.05	570	100.0%

KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

TABLE XII

PROJECTED RETIREMENT OF

RESPONDENTS

RETIREMENT	N	%
Within 10 years	316	57.98
More than 10 years	229	42.02
TOTALS	**545**	**100.0%**

KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

TABLE XIII
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT OF RESPONDENTS

ENROLLMENT	N	%
Less than 100	21	3.76
100 - 199	65	11.63
200 - 299	100	17.89
300 - 399	104	18.60
400 - 499	96	17.17
500 - 599	72	12.88
600 - 699	54	9.66
700 - 799	23	4.11
800 - 899	13	2.33
900 - 999	5	0.89
1000 - 1099	3	0.54
1100 - 1199	1	0.18
1200 - 1299	0	0.00
1300 - 1399	0	0.00
1400 - 1499	0	0.00
1500 - 1599	0	0.00
1600 - 1699	1	0.18
1700 - 1799	0	0.00
1800 - 1899	1	0.18
1900 - 1999	0	0.00
2000 - 2099	0	0.00
TOTALS $\bar{X}$ = 308.04	559	100.0%

KENTUCKY ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS

TABLE XIV

MERIT PAY PERCEPTIONS

OF RESPONDENTS

FAVOR	N	%
YES	251	47.27
NO	280	52.73
TOTALS	531	100.00

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